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STATE FOR EUR/AGS - VIKMANIS-KELLER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KUNR](#) [AORC](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN VIEWS ON UN REFORM

REF: A. (A) STATE 111637

[B.](#) (B) STATE 111657

[C.](#) (C) STATE 113168

[1](#)1. Summary: Austria welcomes U.S. initiatives for UN reform. In conversations with the Foreign Minister and the MFA's International Organizations director, we found broad Austrian agreement to U.S. objectives regarding reftel concepts on development, reform of the Commission on Human Rights, democracy initiatives, administrative reform, a Peacebuilding Commission, the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and Security Council reform. End Summary.

[1](#)2. The Ambassador presented U.S. views on UN reform to Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik on July 1 (reported septel). In preparation for that meeting, EconPolCouns discussed UN reform in detail on June 24 with Walter Lichem, the Austrian MFA's assistant secretary-level Director for International Organizations Affairs. Lichem has been deeply engaged for years in high-level discussions of UN reform, and helped create many of the concepts now reaching fruition. In general, he welcomed the initiatives we outlined.

Development

[1](#)3. Lichem agreed that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is not the only component of a development strategy. Economic interaction is crucial, he acknowledged. He added that as an Austrian who benefitted from CARE packages, he also values private charity. (Note: As reported septel, FM Plassnik noted that Austria still values agreed targets for ODA. End note.)

Reform of the Commission on Human Rights

[1](#)4. Austria agrees with the concept of replacing the Commission on Human Rights with a Human Rights Council. Austria also agrees that the body should be smaller, that membership should be by a 2/3 vote, and that the other organizational reforms we suggest should enter into effect.

[1](#)5. Lichem urged the U.S. to take the lead conceptually. He said only the U.S. understands the concept of integrating multiple policy objectives, and, therefore, only the U.S. can grasp how to integrate the human rights dimension into overall economic, social, environmental and societal policy. Lichem acknowledged that the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is "a disaster." However, ECOSOC has potential, he said, because it is a platform for the integration of the various elements of development.

[1](#)6. In this connectdion, and on a cautionary note, Lichem said creation of a Human Rights Council could run counter to the goal of integrating human rights objectives into overall economic and social policy. This area "needs a discourse," he said.

Democracy Initiatives and the Democracy Fund

[1](#)7. Lichem said Austria agrees with the U.S. on the creation of the Democracy Fund. It is important to use it properly, he said. The programs needing support were those which would help transform societies into ones in which people could assume the responsibilities of democracy. This was a capacity-building exercise, he said.

Budget, Management and Administrative Reform

[1](#)8. Lichem agreed with our specific organizational recommendations. As someone who served for years in the UN Secretariat and who worked with several American Under

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Secretary Generals for Management, Lichem added that reform

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efforts had to recognize the complexity of the Secretariat. He said that a U.S. study of the Secretariat staff many years ago had highlighted the fact that the motivations and aspirations of international staff members were different from those which prevailed in specialized UN agencies, in national foreign services or in the corporate world.

Creation of a Peacebuilding Commission

19. The Peacebuilding Commission could indeed be a deliverable for a High-Level Event, Lichem said. He argued that the composition of the Commission should be "mixed" among permanent and ad hoc members. A permanent "core group" would consist of the P-5, the chair of the Human Rights Council, and perhaps the chair of ECOSOC. Others, such as key contributors to the budget and contributors to peacekeeping missions, could participate as the circumstances of a particular mission might require.

110. Lichem said the European Union had discussed this issue at the expert level. The emerging consensus was that it was necessary to encourage more coordination at the local level of crisis management. It was also important to consider who would take the lead at different stages of a peacebuilding operation. If, for instance, the primary focus at a particular stage was development, and security forces were there to enable development, then perhaps development experts should take the lead.

111. Lichem disagreed with our opposition to the establishment of a multi-year Standing Fund for Peacebuilding. He argued that it would be important for the UN to be able to respond immediately, and not wait weeks or months for national governments to make funds available.

Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)

112. Lichem agreed that the international community should not get stuck on agreeing to a "definition" of terrorism. Instead, we should "describe" it, and move on.

UN Security Council (UNSC) Reform

113. Lichem said he was pleased that the U.S. was taking a "go slow" approach to UNSC reform. In view of the findings of Administrative Science, as developed in the U.S., a body with more than 20 members could not manage crises. Therefore, it was important to limit UNSC membership to that figure, if possible.

114. The Austrian position, he said, is that the Security Council has worked well, and that current proposals to expand it could kill it. He expressed grave concern that the "G-4" resolution had already garnered support from most African members, and could well pass. He urged the U.S. to take leadership for defeating the G-4 proposal.

115. Austria had a proposal which it would deploy as a compromise, once the G-4 proposal failed. It called for expanding the Security Council by four (preferably) or no more than five non-permanent members. The non-permanent members would be subject to re-election (abolishing Article 23.2 of the UN Charter, which prohibits re-election). Elections would occur two years before countries assumed their seats -- permitting capacity building and a "buy in" of a larger number of countries into the work of the Security Council.

116. Lichem described Austria's guiding principles for UNSC reform. The first is sovereign equality: aside from the historical exception of the P-5, no other countries should become permanent members. The second is effectiveness: the UNSC should be no larger than 20 members. The third is a democratic mandate for UNSC members: the possibility of re-election would make UNSC members accountable, responsible and responsive to their "electorate" (i.e., the other member states of the UN).

117. Lichem said he very much liked the U.S. view that the UN does not have to make a decision on UNSC reform before the September HLE. The issue requires a rational development of ideas, he said.
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